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## POPE TO BRAZIL'S BISHOPS: PROMOTE UNITY

### Recalls 1st Mass Said in Nation 500 Years Ago

CASTEL GANDOLFO, SEPT. 10, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI urged the bishops of Brazil to promote dialogue among Christians in their country, but reminded them that unity is ultimately a gift from God.

The Pope said this today upon addressing members of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (Northeast region 3), on the occasion of their five-yearly "ad limina" visit to Rome.

In his address, the Holy Father recalled the Catholic heritage of Brazil, which goes back more than 500 years to the first Mass that took place in the country.

He said that Mass marked "the first time that the Gospel of Christ was being proclaimed to this people, illumining their daily life. This evangelizing action of the Catholic Church was and continues to be fundamental in the constitution of the identity of the Brazilian people, characterized by harmonious coexistence between persons coming from different regions and cultures."

"The values of the Catholic faith have molded Brazilian hearts and spirit," the Pontiff observed.

Benedict XVI, however, lamented the "growing influence of new elements of society, which a few decades ago were practically foreign. This causes a consistent abandonment by many Catholics of the ecclesial life and even of the Church."

The Holy Father noted the surge of evangelical and neo-Pentecostal communities, and urged the Church in Brazil to "commit herself to a new evangelization that spares no efforts in the

search for lapsed Catholics, as well as for persons who know little or nothing of the evangelical message, leading them to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, living and active in his Church."

## Ecumenism

The Pope also called for the establishment of a "healthy ecumenical dialogue in truth" with other Christian confessions in the country.

"Division between Christians is in opposition to the will of the Lord that 'all be one,'" he noted, adding that the "lack of unity is cause of scandal that ends by undermining the credibility of the Christian message proclaimed in society."

"The search for Christian unity has not a few obstacles before it," the Pontiff continued. "In the first place, an erroneous view of ecumenism must be rejected that induces a certain doctrinal indifference that attempts to level, in an a-critical Ireneism, all 'opinions' in a sort of ecclesiological relativism.

"Together with this is the challenge of the incessant multiplication of new Christian groups, some of them using an aggressive proselytism, which shows how the landscape of ecumenism continues to be very differentiated and confused."

Benedict XVI urged the bishops to take "positive steps" toward dialogue, but reminded them that "at the heart of all efforts for unity must be prayer, conversion and sanctification of life."

"It is the Lord who gives unity," he explained. "This is not a creation of men, it is up to pastors to obey the Lord's will, promoting concrete initiatives, free of any conformist reductionism, but carried out with sincerity and realism, with patience and perseverance which spring from faith in the providential action of the Holy Spirit."

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